

Iran U-19 Volleyballers Want to Defend Title at World Championship

TEHRAN (Dispatfhes) – Iran is going to defend its title at the 2019 FIVB Boys’ U-19 World Championship, fivb.org reported.

The 2019 FIVB Boys’ U-19 World Championship got underway on Wednesday in the Tunisian capital - though there’s a handful of players that do have some impressive previous exposure to world-level volleyball.

Iran is going to defend the title it won two years ago in Bahrain, when it beat Russia 3-1 in the final at Riffa.

That was Iran’s second title in the history of the competition, after its success in 2007 when it edged China 3-2 in an all-Asia affair in Tijuana.

The Asian powerhouse will also



be looking at replicating the triumph of the men’s U-21 team last month, when it beat Italy 3-2 in the final of that age-group World

Championship, also in Bahrain.

Indeed, as many as four players from that squad from last month’s U-21s are in Tunis to

try and get their personal second world championship gold of the season. This includes both starting middle blockers, Amir Hossein Toukhteh and Mehran Feyz, alongside Mahdi Jelveh, yet another middle blocker, and opposite Bardia Saadat.

The three middle blockers, despite their young age, could be considered ‘veterans’, amongst the debutantes of this World Championship: At 17, they had all already been part the Iran squad that won the 2017 U-19 gold in Riffa.

Iran is pitted against the Czech Republic, Italy, Colombia and Bulgaria in Pool B.

Mohammad Vakili’s team will start the journey with a match against Bulgaria on Thursday

FIFA Clears Iraq to Host World Cup Qualifying Games in Basra

ZURICH (AP) — FIFA says the southern Iraqi city of Basra can host the national team’s return to playing World Cup qualifying games at home.

Security concerns since the 1980s have forced Iraq to host most qualifiers in neutral countries. Iraq played “home” games in Iran, Jordan and Malaysia in a failed attempt to reach the 2018 tournament.

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In this June 1, 2017 file photo, Iraq, in green, in action against Jordan, in red, during their friendly football match in Basra, southeast of Baghdad, Iraq.

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U.S. to Face Latvia in Fed Cup, Romania to Play Russia

LONDON (AP) -- The United States will face Latvia for a place in next year’s Fed Cup finals, the first time the “World Cup of Tennis” tournament system will be used.

The draw for February’s quali-

fying matches pits the Americans against a Latvian team that could include former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko and last year’s U.S. Open semifinalist Anastasija Sevastova.

Romania, the home country of Wimbledon champion Simona Halep, will play Russia, while Spain will face Japan, Canada plays Switzerland and Britain takes on Slovakia.

Four nations, including 2019 Fed Cup finalists Australia and France and host nation Hungary, have already qualified for the inaugural 12-team final tournament in April 2020.

Fiorentina Sign Free Agent Ribery

ROME (Dispatches) - Former Bayern Munich winger Franck Ribery has joined Fiorentina on a free transfer.

Ribery, 36, became a free agent in the summer after 12 years at the Bundesliga club.

The Frenchman joined the German side in 2007 and made 425 appearances, winning nine Bundesliga titles and the Champions League in 2013. “I’m delighted. Let’s achieve something together,” he told Fiorentina’s official website.

Dubai Uses Extreme Cold Cryotherapy to Treat Racehorses in World First

DUBAI (Reuters) - In the searing summer heat of Dubai, some of the world’s top racehorses are being swathed in freezing nitrogen mist to boost their performance.

Cryotherapy, which surrounds the body in a mist as cold as -140°C, has been used for decades on athletes to aid recovery and in medicine. A Dubai-based company, Revive Cryotherapy, says it is now offering the first whole body cryotherapy chamber for horses.

“As far as recovery goes we are learning, but it is positive so far,” said Satish Seemar, head trainer at Zabeel Racing Stables which trains about 125 horses.

“The horses start hopping quick-

er after their hard work and racing than without cryotherapy,” he added.

Dubai, part of the United Arab Emirates, is known for its connections to elite horse racing. Its ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, is an avid sponsor, owner and rider of horses. The emirate gives out multi-million dollar prizes at prestigious competitions.

“Horse racing is a big business with prizes worth millions of dollars. With cryotherapy we have seen that you can train harder, recover quicker and you can race more often,” said Luka Jurkovic, general manager of Revive Cryotherapy.



Dubai stables gives prize racehorses cryotherapy

Canada Beat New Zealand 103-100 in Exhibition Basketball



*Kyle Wiltjer (33) scored 18 points and grabbed five rebounds in Canada’s overtime win over New Zealand.

SYDNEY (AP) - Phil Scrubb scored 24 points to lead Canada to a 103-100 overtime win over New Zealand in a pre-World Cup exhibition basketball game Wednesday.

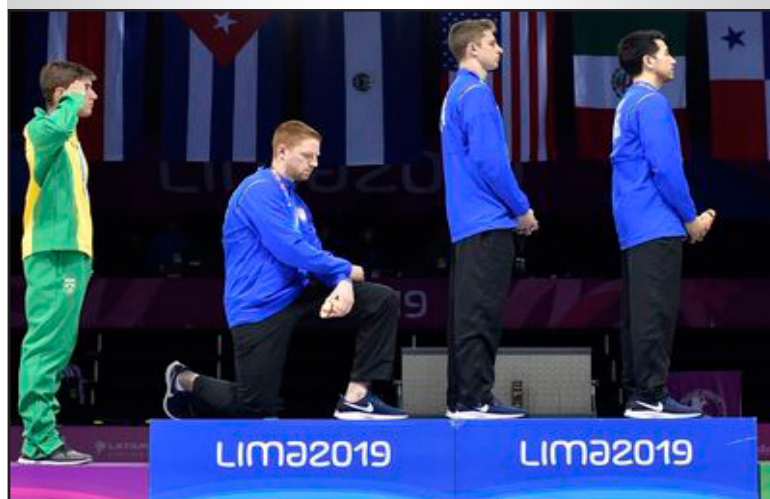
Corey Webster led New Zealand with 33 points, including a three-point play on a driving shot with 13 seconds remaining

that forced the game into overtime at 81-81.

On Tuesday, Canada beat New Zealand 122-88. Canada plays Team USA next Monday, also in Sydney. Australia plays Team USA in games on Thursday and Saturday in Melbourne.

The World Cup begins in China on Aug. 31.

Pan Am Games Protesters Each Get 12 Months of Probation



U.S. fencer Race Imboden staged protests on the medal stand at the Pan American Gam

DENVER (AP) — The letters went to the two protesters. The message was meant for a much wider audience.

The CEO of the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee sent letters of reprimand to hammer thrower Gwen Berry and fencer Race Imboden for protesting on the medals stand last week at the Pan American Games, but the 12-month probations that came with the letters also included a none-too-subtle signal for anyone vying for next year’s Olympics.

“It is also important for me to point out that, going forward, issuing a

reprimand to other athletes in a similar instance is insufficient,” Sarah Hirshland wrote in the letters sent Tuesday.

Neither Berry’s raised fist nor Imboden’s kneel-down on the Pan Am medals stand were met with immediate consequences, in part because they happened at the tail end of the games that were wrapping up in Lima, Peru.

Hirshland’s letter was as clear a sign as possible that athletes who try the same next year in Tokyo could face a different reaction.

Ajax Finish With 10 Men, a Goalless Draw in Cyprus



APOEL midfielder Musa Suleiman gave Nicolas Tagliafico and Daley Blind and the Ajax defense a difficult time.

PARIS (AFP) - Ajax have finished with 10 men but moved closer to the Champions League group stage with a 0-0 draw away to APOEL in Nicosia in a playoff round first-leg match.

The game was goalless but packed with incident.

Ajax, a four-time winner of the competition and a semifinalist last season, dominated possession and created a string of promising situations.

But the lively home attack, with 22-year-old Jordanian Musa Suleiman showing some eye-catching form, created the most dangerous chances.

Ajax conceded a string of free kicks in the second half and Noussair Mazraoui paid the price when a flailing tackle on Uros Matic earned him a second yellow card with 10 minutes to play.

Veteran striker Klass Jan Huntelaar, who came on with 12 minutes left, had a clear opportunity to win the game in added time, but the 36-year-old’s tame chip was cleared.

“We gave the ball away too easily and we must improve next week,” said Ajax attacker Dusan Tadic. “I expect the same compact defensive zone from APOEL in the second game. But we need to play much better.”

While Ajax were disappointed with an away draw, Nicholas Ioannou, APOEL captain, was happy with his team’s chances.

“We played really well,” he said. “We defended very well and had some good chances at the other end to score. We were quite unlucky not to. We still be-

lieve we can go through.”

There was only goal from open play in the night’s three matches, but it was a pretty strike to give Slavia Prague a 1-0 victory in Cluj.

Nicolae Stanciu played a 28th-minute corner to Lukas Masopust, lurking outside the penalty area. The midfielder flighted the ball into the far corner of the net with the gentlest of long-range volleys.

“We practiced those corner kicks two days ago and I couldn’t hit the ball well,” said Masopust adding that team captain Tomas Soucek “told me today to try it with the side-foot and it worked.”

Cluj coach Dan Petrescu was less impressed.

“Was it a pass or a shot?” he asked. “It was like table tennis.”

Cluj won a penalty in the 79th minute, but Ondrej Kolar saved French striker Billel Omrani left-foot spot kick.

“I knew that the penalty-taking player always waits until the very last moment before kicking the ball, so I waited, did not lose my nerve and saved it,” said Kolar. “It was my first saved penalty for Slavia.”

In Austria, Linz ASK fell behind to Club Brugge in the eighth minute and despite a late siege of the visitors’ goal, lost 1-0.

Centre back Gernot Trauner was caught in possession by Lois Openda and clumsily ran into the striker. Hans Vanaken slammed home the penalty kick.